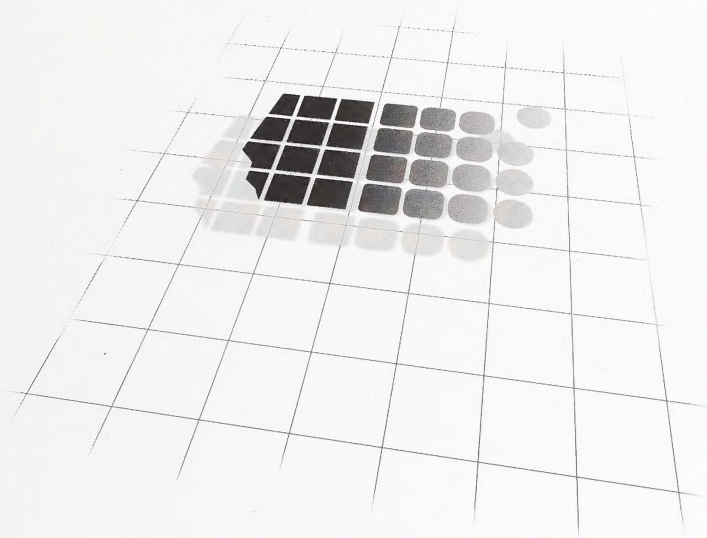


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ANNUAL REPORT



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The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities



ALBERTA
HEALTH

Office of the Minister

July 22, 1996

The Honourable Ralph Klein
Premier of Alberta
307 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6

Dear Sir:

I have the honour to present the seventh Annual Report of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This report covers activities undertaken by the Council during the fiscal year ending March 31, 1996. It is submitted in accordance with the provisions of s.7(1) of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Act for your presentation to the Legislative Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Halvar C. Jonson'.

Halvar C. Jonson
Minister of Health

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



In 1992, Ralph Klein became Premier of Alberta. The following year, his government was re-elected and, in the years since, the management of our province has undergone a radical overhaul. To match government's evolution, the Council began to adapt and change its focus as well.

In 1995, I believe we sharpened our focus, which culminated in some work that we are very proud of. This work is outlined in detail in the following pages of this annual report.

What is the renewed focus of the Council, and why has it changed? To begin with, it's not entirely new—we've maintained many necessary roles we've played in the past, including that of advising bureaucracy on program delivery and liaising between community and government. But we've placed considerable emphasis on understanding the impact of change in our province for people with disabilities and, as a consequence, all Albertans.

This Council's Mission, as written in the Act that empowers it, is "to enhance and promote the opportunity for full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in the life of the province." Given the radical changes in our province—the most significant of which are an emphasis on individual responsibility and devolution of responsibility for service delivery to regional authorities—we asked ourselves how we could best achieve our Mission with our limited resources.

Ultimately, it was decided we could make the most impact by trying to understand where, as a province, we're going. In other words, what will Alberta look like when the bulk of change has taken place?

Only by gaining this understanding could we strive to ensure that Albertans with disabilities achieve total inclusion in the life and fabric of their communities. So, in addition to maintaining our traditional duties, we began work on a series of discussion papers in the 1994-95 fiscal year.

The first paper, *A New Context: New Threats, New Opportunities*, was released in February 1995. This paper reviewed the context in which the Klein government had come to power, outlined its apparent priorities, and analyzed the threats and opportunities for persons with disabilities.

This paper was essentially unchallenged. In fact, response from both the community and government was encouraging, and so we continued the discussion this year with the development of a supplementary paper, *A New Context, A New Vision* (see page 8 for details).

Again, the response has been both positive and encouraging. While the theme of the papers continually returns to the imperative of inclusion for Albertans with disabilities in the communities of their choice and the difficulties associated with assuring that inclusion, there have been unexpected side benefits. Some government officials report that the papers have helped them clarify their roles and put their work in context—and not just those working in the disability policy arena. Business leaders are beginning to recognize that they may have a social role to play. And communities—the locus of change—view our work as a resource as they gradually assume greater responsibility.

What makes these papers attract attention? Apparently, no one else has put such an analysis in writing. We are encouraged by the positive response from opinion leaders to continue this work.

In the brief period of time remaining before our sunset clause is invoked in 1998, we will attempt to bring closure to this work. In part, this will mean convincing government, business, regional authorities, and communities to develop a social policy framework to accompany the economic policy for the province. In this way, we hope to see all citizens benefit from the Alberta Advantage.

Gary McPherson

Gary McPherson
Chairperson



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Looking back on the 1995 - 96 fiscal year, I am tempted to begin with a quote like, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." But in the end it was neither. Instead it was a year of great change, punctuated by successes and disappointments.

The failure of the Council to achieve its vision of a consolidated community supports program has meant watching various disability programs become more fragmented and the risk of cuts in the type or amount of support creep closer to services provided to persons with disabilities.

Devolution of health programs and services to 17 quite autonomous regional authorities, and the subsequent reorganization of Alberta Health, has resulted in greater challenges for the Council as it tries to monitor the impact on programs like Home Care. It is no longer clear what proportion of Home Care funding is supporting people with chronic or ongoing needs and how much is being used to supplement the acute care hospital system. However, it is clear that each health authority is doing things somewhat differently. Many people with long term disabilities are unhappy as they perceive their services eroding.

Within the next two years we will see added to the 17 health authorities another 17 children's services authorities, six authorities for services to people with developmental disabilities and possibly several mental health authorities. The potential is great for individuals needing an array of services to be completely confused or to get lost in these systems.

In the Chairperson's message, Gary points out two key directions government services will continue to take in Alberta: communities will do more, and individuals will assume greater responsibility. The demand on every Albertan's time to "get involved" is not easily met by people with disabilities. Further, most advocacy organizations are ill equipped to advocate in 17 different regions.


Community development does not occur overnight, and for vulnerable people it often does not occur at all. Our analysis of the nature and impact of changes in Alberta, especially on disadvantaged individuals, leads the Council to believe that active community development is a must. There is a role for government here, along with business and the voluntary/non-profit sectors. And so our work on "A New Context" will continue into the next year in hopes of stimulating action. We count as a great success the support we have received for this work to date.

Some disability-related programs that were slated to be cut have been given extensions (e.g., Home Adaptation Program), while others have received more funds (e.g., Home Care, although how the funds are allocated between acute and long term needs is unknown).

Alberta Transportation is continuing to push ahead with the barrier free transportation agenda outlined in 1994-95 and has assured the Council that they will see this three year plan to completion. The Barrier Free Design Committee has completed its recommendations for changes to the Alberta Building Code, which will go out for consultation.

A review of the implementation of sign language interpreting standards in educational settings was completed by the Council this year, and many good suggestions were received from stakeholders for improvements to the document. It will be revised and released next year. Other projects and achievements are described elsewhere in this annual report.

Finally, an observation: the current structure of the Premier's Council is not well suited to the new, decentralized and devolved policy and service delivery mechanisms. Our experience with regional health authorities has confirmed this. It will, therefore, be one of the Council's undertakings for 1996-97 to determine a more effective mechanism by which to achieve our mission of enhancing and promoting full and equal participation in the life of the province.



Fran Vargo
Executive Director



THE YEAR IN REVIEW



OVERVIEW

The work of the Premier's Council during the 1995/96 fiscal year was a mix of old and new. Many of the traditional roles that Council has assumed since 1988 continued; new projects were initiated and completed. Work was performed by Council staff and consultants contracted on an as needed basis. The following is a summary of the key areas in which work was carried out.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTS PROJECT

The vision for this project was of a "one stop shopping" approach to the design and delivery of personal and technical support programs to enable seniors and people with disabilities to live in their own homes. The vision proposed the amalgamation of resources from a multiplicity of existing programs offered by several departments and numerous community agencies.

A task force report completed in 1994 recommended that government proceed with implementation. In the face of regionalization of health services, the Minister of Health was directed to lead the next phase. In 1995 an implementation task force was appointed, consisting of consumers representing seniors and people with physical and developmental disabilities, members of regional health authorities, and interested citizens.

The work of the task force was completed in June, 1995, and it was then disbanded. No further work has been done on the consolidation of supports under a single umbrella. The Council will continue to monitor the impact of program changes on individuals with disabilities.

DISABILITY INFORMATION NETWORK OF ALBERTA

This year, the Council once again attempted to develop a solution aimed at providing Albertans with easy access to information about disability programs, services and support groups. The Internet was identified as the vehicle of choice. Potential funding partners wanted to see a prototype before making a commitment.

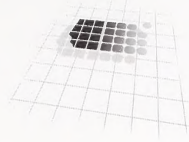
The prototype was prepared, software to convert information to Internet format was developed, and a pilot project was initiated. Unfortunately, response to the pilot project by community agencies was insufficient to justify continuation.

There are many players in the information/database development business; several of these focus on disability and related areas. The Council was unable to facilitate a partnership since most players expressed a preference to develop their own solution, rather than collaborate.

The expressed need for information by consumers and service providers has not diminished over the years; in fact, the devolution of service delivery to regions has increased the need for a comprehensive information source. However, the Council has no further resources to devote to this challenge, and will opt instead to look for opportunities to support others in their efforts.

FEDERAL CONSULTATION

This year, with the federal government proposing and carrying out significant restructuring in the delivery of grants to provinces for social programs, the Council stepped up its efforts to provide advice at the federal level.



Presentations were made to members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons concerning the newly developed Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) and the review of the five year National Strategy for the Integration of Disabled Persons. Council urged the federal government to retain responsibility for setting standards for provincial spending of the CHST and to make a renewed commitment to Canadians with disabilities as the National Strategy came to a close at year end.

Council participated in the review of social programs and policy conducted by the Minister of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). Presentations made in this area emphasized that social programs should be restructured in such a way that people with disabilities are encouraged to join the workforce; the ongoing need for income replacement programs was also emphasized.

Council participated at meetings sponsored by the Disabled Persons Secretariat of HRDC with the goal of arriving at solutions aimed at keeping disability issues on the federal agenda.

Finally, Council participated in discussions hosted by Max Yalden, Chief Commissioner of Canadian Human Rights Commission. These meetings served to help the Commission make recommendations to the federal government designed to promote equal opportunity and rights for Canadians with disabilities.

INFORMATION

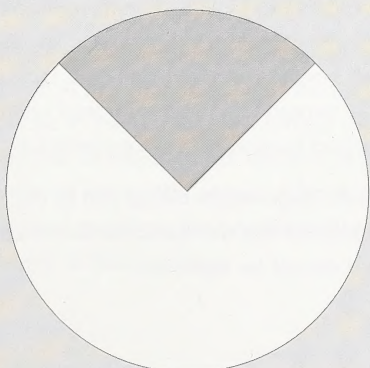
In the absence of a centralized database or information service to assist individuals with disabilities, particularly those with no affiliation to specific disability organizations, the Council continued to offer assistance through its toll-free telephone number. A summary of calls received from across Alberta is presented in the chart below.

1995-96 INFORMATION CALLS

During 1995-96, some 320 telephone requests for information were received at the offices of the Premier's Council. Subsequently, 192 referrals were given.

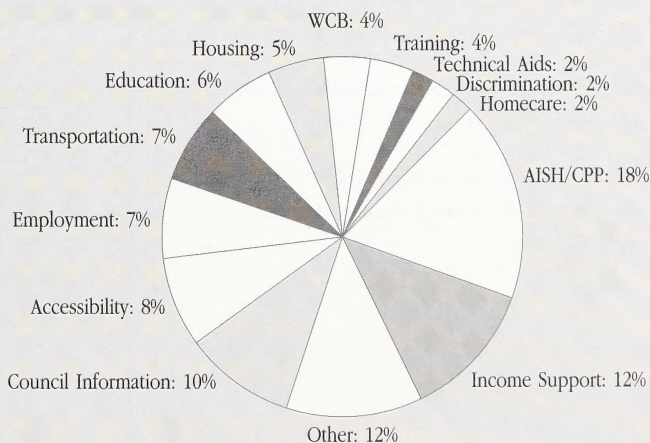
WHO CALLED?

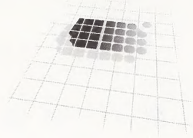
Other (Government, Private Company): 25%



Individual Consumer or Advocate: 75%

WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION WAS NEEDED?





The Council continued to publish *Status Report*, a twelve page newsletter intended to promote discussion on disability and highlight the work being done in the disability arena here in Alberta and around the world. *Status Report* is published quarterly and approximately 5,000 copies are distributed to individuals, organizations, agencies, professionals, politicians and government workers.

MEASURING OUTCOMES

This year, as the Council moved closer to its 1998 sunset clause, it continued to evaluate the effect it has had during its life span. The first step was an outcome measures survey of 13 government departments.

Results are being interpreted as mixed. Some highlights of the survey indicate that of the 13 departments:

- nine report they have implemented recommendations made by the Council;
- ten report they have put policies in place which address the needs of persons with disabilities;
- five report they have established an ongoing advisory mechanism that includes persons with disabilities, while a further three indicate they seek advice from persons with disabilities in other ways;
- nine report they provide information in alternative formats;
- five report they have a TDD/TTY allowing deaf people to contact the department directly.

STANDARDS FOR INTERPRETING REVIEW

In February 1994 the Council released *Standards for Interpreting in Educational Settings*. These standards were developed to assist school jurisdictions in hiring and supervising qualified individuals to provide communication assistance to deaf and hard of hearing students. This year, the Council carried out a review to determine the extent these standards had been implemented across the province. Data for the review were collected through literature review, interviews and questionnaires.

Results ranged from good to nil. The four large urban boards appeared to use the standards to a considerable extent. Rural boards, on the other hand, rarely used the standards; some weren't even aware of the standards' existence. In most rural settings, many people hired to provide communication assistance had no formal training in sign language interpretation.

Several issues were raised as a result of the review. These included the overall shortage of qualified interpreters in smaller centres, lack of professional workshops outside of Edmonton and Calgary for interpreters to raise their skill level, and the impracticality of limiting the job description of an interpreter as the children they provide services to have wide-ranging needs. Finally, many parents felt the original standards document emphasized American Sign Language (ASL) and ignored their wishes for their children to use Signed English or oral interpretation.

Overall, respondents taking part in the review believed that the standards document could and should be improved.



DISCUSSION PAPERS

In the past three years, radical change has taken place in the management of our province. The size, scope, role and costs of government bodies have all been reduced in this time. Clearly, these changes hold implications for Albertans with disabilities.

Last year, the Council began to shift its focus to predict these implications and stimulate discussion of them. Early in 1995, the paper *A New Context: New Threats, New Opportunities* was released. This paper reviewed the context in which the Klein government had come to power and analyzed the threats and opportunities for people with disabilities. In December, 1995, the Council prepared and released the follow-up paper, *A New Context, A New Vision*. The purpose of this paper was to stimulate discussion on social and economic policy in the context of change in four areas: competitiveness, community, health and well-being, and accountability.

Both papers have been widely circulated and have received a highly favourable response from politicians, government managers, organizations, service providers and private companies. One reason appears to be that the papers, in attempting to provide a blueprint for people with disabilities, are of value to all Albertans.

Through the responses of some readers, the Council has been urged to continue with this work. In the coming year, further discussion papers will be released with the goal of painting a picture of life in 21st century Alberta. There are several questions the Council will attempt to answer in these papers.

For example, what will happen after the deficit has been eliminated? What are the specific challenges facing the private and voluntary sectors in light of a shrunken public sector? How much responsibility will communities have? Who will have the job of revitalizing communities and individuals as they assume a greater burden?

The goal of this work is the discussion and finalization of all of these papers at a forum late in 1996. Ultimately, the Council seeks to provide a framework and principles that will define "what it means to be an Albertan" in the new context and ensure that the promise of Alberta in the next century will be inclusive and offered to all Albertans, regardless of ability.

ACCESSIBILITY

Over the course of the year, the Council continued to respond to requests to review public facility designs that are supposed to meet the barrier free requirements of the Alberta Building Code.

Although most designers are recognizing the requirements of the building code, the Council believes that there remains a considerable distance to travel before ideal barrier free design solutions are commonplace. One challenge continues to be that what is ideal for one person with a disability is not necessarily ideal for another.



PRESENTATIONS

With a portion of its ongoing mandate devoted to the furthering of disability awareness in our province, the Council made numerous presentations over the course of the year. The following is a sampling of these.

- A presentation was made to private sector companies at a forum hosted by the Alberta Economic Development Authority. The presentation focused on the role of the private sector in ensuring that the “Alberta Advantage” translates into inclusive employment opportunities and, overall, inclusive communities.
- A presentation focusing on disability awareness and the work of the Council was made to students of the Rehabilitation Practitioner program at Grant MacEwan Community College.
- A presentation on disability awareness and the work of the Council was made to students of the Adaptive Physical Education program at the University of Alberta.
- A speech on disability awareness and quality of life issues was made to member physicians of the Alberta chapter of Alpha Omega Alpha.
- A keynote address highlighting the breaking down of barriers was delivered at the opening of National Access Awareness Week.
- A presentation on health and well-being issues for people with disabilities was made at the Canadian Paraplegic Association’s 50th Anniversary conference.

COMMITTEES

Members of the Council’s secretariat continued to sit on various committees and participate in forums in their individual areas of expertise. These committees and forums included:

- Services to Persons with Disabilities Management Committee;
- Barrier Free Design Committee;
- Canadian Urban Transportation Association Annual Conference;
- Faculty of Nursing Advisory Board;
- Special Education Advisory Committee;
- National Meeting of Provincial Councils;
- Continuing Care Outcome Measures Steering Committee;
- Advisory Committee on Barrier Free Transportation
- Minister’s Forum on Adult Learning.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In response to concerns expressed by consumers regarding the impact of regionalization of services such as healthcare, mental health and children’s services, the Council facilitated a series of workshops across the province to help individuals in communities come together to identify common issues and methods to solve the problems.

Many issues were identified and some communities have begun to develop solutions to address these concerns. Other participants have asked for time to discuss their concerns further and will contact the Council if they need assistance with the development of an action plan for mobilizing their community around the issues.

C O U N C I L M E M B E R S H I P

ROLE OF MEMBERS

The Premier's Council is composed of up to fifteen members, who are appointed for three year terms. Members meet on a quarterly basis to discuss current issues, establish priorities and guide the Council's secretariat in its day-to-day work.

Members are appointed on the basis of their track record in community participation, knowledge of disability issues, and geographic location in Alberta.

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

In December, 1995, Ray Hegerat, Kaye Brock and Everett Soop completed their second and final terms as members. The Premier's Council wishes to thank them for their dedication and hard work.

Replacements for these members had not been appointed at the close of the year.



CURRENT COUNCIL MEMBERS AS OF APRIL 1, 1995

Back Row (Left to Right): Ray Hegerat (Edmonton), Phil Stephan (Red Deer), Doug Giles (Cold Lake), Judy Eshenko (Banff)

Front Row (Left to Right): Cindy Gordon (Edmonton), Joan Charbonneau (Alberta Beach), Gary McPherson, Chairperson (Edmonton), Shirley Dupmeier (Medicine Hat), Kaye Brock (Calgary)

Missing: Everett Soop (Blood Reserve, Cardston), Neil Marshall (Calgary)

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OBJECT OF EXPENDITURE	AUTHORIZED	EXPENDED	UNEXPENDED (OVEREXPENDED)
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Manpower

Salaries — Permanent Positions	75,800	75,841	(41)
Salaries — Non-permanent Positions	102,000	57,054	44,946
Payments to Contract Employees	76,400	116,222	(39,822)
Employer Contributions	21,100	21,088	12
Allowances and Benefits	3,700	4,713	(1,013)
Total Manpower	279,000	274,918	4,082

Supplies and Services

Travel Expenses	45,000	21,339	23,661
Advertising	2,000	841	1,159
Insurance	0	83	(83)
Freight and Postage	17,500	6,287	11,213
Rentals	7,000	2,785	4,215
Telephones and Communications	4,400	1,835	2,565
Repairs and Maintenance	3,300	529	2,771
Contract Services	199,300	255,583	(56,283)
Hosting	5,000	1,409	3,591
Other Purchased Services	22,500	15,334	7,166
Materials and Supplies	10,000	9,346	654
Total Supplies and Services	316,000	315,371	629

Total Expenditures 95/96	595,000	590,289	4,711
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